SOC 223

Social Inequality and Social Policy

S2 Day 2015

Dept of Sociology

Contents

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Senior Lecturer
Shaun Wilson
shaun.wilson@mq.edu.au
Contact via 9850 8620
W6A829
2pm Wednesdays

Tutor
Charlotte Overgaard
charlotte.overgaard@mq.edu.au
Contact via TBA
To be advised.

Credit points
3

Prerequisites
12cp

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

What role does government have in addressing inequality between individuals and groups? If governments make things fairer, what incentives are there for hard work and individual effort? Is the welfare state in decline because of an ageing population, tight budgets and globalisation? Is Australia overly generous when it comes to social spending? Few areas in sociology are as contentious and vital as the ongoing debates about who should get social support and how it should be delivered. This unit offers a detailed introduction to the history, design and institutions of social policy and welfare states. Throughout we examine the role of the state in delivering social outcomes for citizens, including social justice, social equality and social efficiency outcomes. We look closely at the development of Australian social policy and consider how policymakers are dealing with problems like an ageing population, unemployment, poor families, and income inequality in a comparative context. We also consider how social policy in Australia and elsewhere is made, and how power and institutional dynamics shape policy outcomes. Through this we assess how different forms of social policy provide alternative views of what a society represents and values. The unit caters for students interested in policy practice, policy analysis, development studies and welfare state research.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Understand the conceptual problems in measuring and evaluating social and economic inequality

Understand the differences between poverty, inequality, injustice, and unfairness

Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.

Apply basic concepts of social policy to a range of contemporary welfare debates, dilemmas and problems

Understand the dynamics that shape different trajectories of national welfare states and their social policies

Assess and analyse future problems confronting welfare states and the design of social policy

Develop skills in critical policy analysis and styles of policy writing relevant to professional work in the area

Understand the critical junctures between work (labour markets), families and social

security systems.

Gain basic understanding of key areas of Australian social policy: health & Medicare, housing, unemployment (welfare-to-work) programs, disability support, family payments, parental leave and childcare, superannuation and retirement.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Assignment 1	25%	Sunday 23 Aug 11.55PM TURNITIN
Assignment 2	30%	Sunday 11 Oct 11.55PM TURNITIN
Final exam	35%	Exam period (end of semester)
Class participation	10%	week 13

Assignment 1

Due: **Sunday 23 Aug 11.55PM TURNITIN**
Weighting: **25%**

The first two assignments involve answering 3-4 questions about inequality and social policy. You will have two weeks to complete the task.

The total word length for each assignment will be 1000-1200 words.

The assignments may require you to:

- read a passage on social policy and discuss or interpret it
- interpret statistical evidence
- comment on, interpret, and discuss a policy document

The assignment will be available on ILearn in week 2.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- Understand the conceptual problems in measuring and evaluating social and economic inequality
- Understand the differences between poverty, inequality, injustice, and unfairness

Assignment 2

Due: **Sunday 11 Oct 11.55PM TURNITIN**
Weighting: **30%**

Similar format as description for assignment 1 (Q & A on readings) but with a focus on problems in contemporary Australian social policy.

The word length will be 1,500 words in total and will be available on ILearn in Week 6.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop skills in critical policy analysis and styles of policy writing relevant to professional work in the area

Final exam

Due: **Exam period (end of semester)**
Weighting: **35%**

A test (90 minutes) to be held during the University exam period consisting of:

- 15 multiple choice questions
- 4 answers to questions (up to a page each)

A study guide, as well as practice papers, will be available to help you prepare for the test.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the conceptual problems in measuring and evaluating social and economic inequality
- Understand the differences between poverty, inequality, injustice, and unfairness
- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Understand the dynamics that shape different trajectories of national welfare states and their social policies
- Assess and analyse future problems confronting welfare states and the design of social policy
- Understand the critical junctures between work (labour markets), families and social security systems.
- Gain basic understanding of key areas of Australian social policy: health & Medicare, housing, unemployment (welfare-to-work) programs, disability support, family payments, parental leave and childcare, superannuation and retirement.

Class participation

Due: **week 13**
Weighting: **10%**

You will be given a combined mark for attendance and class contributions.

You need to attend a minimum of 80% of tutorials -- that is 8 out of 10 tute classes.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the differences between poverty, inequality, injustice, and unfairness
- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Apply basic concepts of social policy to a range of contemporary welfare debates, dilemmas and problems
- Understand the dynamics that shape different trajectories of national welfare states and their social policies
- Assess and analyse future problems confronting welfare states and the design of social policy
- Understand the critical junctures between work (labour markets), families and social security systems.
- Gain basic understanding of key areas of Australian social policy: health & Medicare, housing, unemployment (welfare-to-work) programs, disability support, family payments, parental leave and childcare, superannuation and retirement.

Delivery and Resources

Lectures will be on Wednesdays, 11am-1pm. The classroom is: W5C 320.

Lectures will be recorded.

All teaching materials (articles, book chapters, etc) will be available on SOC 223 e-reserve.

There are two recommended (but not compulsory) texts.

Unit Schedule

1	Introduction to social policy (29-7)	**No workshop**	
2	Social risks, social policy (5-8)	Social risks over the life-course	
3	Poverty and homelessness (12-8)	Why are people poor?	
4	The dynamics of inequality (19-8)	Cumulative disadvantage	
5	Social class (26-8)	Does class matter today?	
6	Australia's welfare state (2-9)	Priorities for welfare	
7	Sweden versus the USA (9-9)	Earn or Learn!	

		MID SEMESTER BREAK		
8	Classifying welfare states (30-9)	Class debate		
9	Indigenous welfare (7-10)	**No workshop/ study week**		
10	Unemployment & welfare to work (14-10)	Income management in focus		
11	Women, work & welfare (21-10)	Families and middle class welfare		
12	Health & Medicare (28-10)	The Medicare copayment controversy		
13	Ageing and social policy/ unit wrap (4-11)	**No workshop**		

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central. Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html

Grading Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html

Grade Appeal Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module for Students
- Ask a Learning Adviser

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Assess and analyse future problems confronting welfare states and the design of social policy
- Develop skills in critical policy analysis and styles of policy writing relevant to professional work in the area

Assessment tasks

- Final exam
- Class participation

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop skills in critical policy analysis and styles of policy writing relevant to professional work in the area
- Gain basic understanding of key areas of Australian social policy: health & Medicare, housing, unemployment (welfare-to-work) programs, disability support, family payments, parental leave and childcare, superannuation and retirement.

Assessment tasks

- Final exam
- Class participation

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Develop skills in critical policy analysis and styles of policy writing relevant to professional work in the area

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the conceptual problems in measuring and evaluating social and economic inequality
- Understand the differences between poverty, inequality, injustice, and unfairness
- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Apply basic concepts of social policy to a range of contemporary welfare debates, dilemmas and problems
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- Gain basic understanding of key areas of Australian social policy: health & Medicare, housing, unemployment (welfare-to-work) programs, disability support, family payments, parental leave and childcare, superannuation and retirement.

Assessment tasks

- Assignment 1
- Final exam
- Class participation

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Apply basic concepts of social policy to a range of contemporary welfare debates,

dilemmas and problems

- Understand the dynamics that shape different trajectories of national welfare states and their social policies
- Assess and analyse future problems confronting welfare states and the design of social policy
- Develop skills in critical policy analysis and styles of policy writing relevant to professional work in the area

Assessment tasks

- Final exam
- Class participation

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the conceptual problems in measuring and evaluating social and economic inequality
- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Apply basic concepts of social policy to a range of contemporary welfare debates, dilemmas and problems
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Assessment tasks

- Assignment 1
- Final exam

- Class participation

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Develop skills in critical policy analysis and styles of policy writing relevant to professional work in the area

Assessment tasks

- Final exam
- Class participation

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Assess and analyse future problems confronting welfare states and the design of social policy
- Gain basic understanding of key areas of Australian social policy: health & Medicare, housing, unemployment (welfare-to-work) programs, disability support, family payments, parental leave and childcare, superannuation and retirement.

Assessment tasks

- Final exam

- Class participation

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand why societies tolerate certain levels and types of inequality, poverty and injustice.
- Assess and analyse future problems confronting welfare states and the design of social policy
- Gain basic understanding of key areas of Australian social policy: health & Medicare, housing, unemployment (welfare-to-work) programs, disability support, family payments, parental leave and childcare, superannuation and retirement.

Assessment tasks

- Final exam
- Class participation

Changes from Previous Offering

This year, we will look closely at changing definitions and debates about social class.